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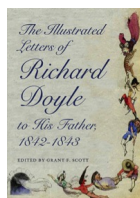
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THE ILLUSTRATED LETTERS OF RICHARD DOYLE TO HIS FATHER, 1842-1843



Ed. Grant F. Scott
(Ohio, 2016) xxii + 335 pp.
Reviewed by **Richard Scully** on 2016-05-21.

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Richard "Dicky" Doyle (1824-1883) is something of an ambiguous figure for students of Victorian art, illustration, and cartooning. Re: **Richard Doyle (1983)**, the prevailing view is that while Doyle was talented, he did not match the genius of his key contemporaries, and this of his tenure on *Punch* (1843-1850) as well as by the way he left it. However, as Grant F. Scott makes abundantly clear in this first scholar to his father, such a view is unfair at best.

In what he calls "one of the most delightful digressions" of his career (xix), Scott updates the rather uneven popular impression of Ri for his importance. In so doing, he also lends further weight to a reappraisal of Dicky's father -- the great John "HB" Doyle (1797-1868), ca Conan Doyle -- who is featured in studies such as Richard Gaunt, ed., *Peel in Caricature* (2014) and Richard Scully, "Founding a Dynasty ar *International Journal of Comic Art* (2016). Across more than 300 pages of archival material, analysis, and annotation, Scott takes us back t art of Doyle himself and the incisive scholarship of a standout professor of English literature and Victorian culture. The result is a triumph f boon for students of Victorian Studies. Great service has thus been done to a still under-appreciated artist, his world, and the remarkable d satirists, and scholars, to which he belonged.

The framing scholarship and contextualisation of the fifty-three letters is of an impeccable standard (as one would expect from so everything one would like to know about the contents of the book, the Preface carefully and methodically explains the provenance of the l problem of dating them, and the editorial procedures adopted. Thereafter, a more comprehensive Introduction explores the essential conte particularly strong on the biographical context for their composition. In particular, Scott makes it clear that while Richard's mother has long actually died on December 11, 1839. As Scott points out, the date of her death has a major bearing on Dicky's letters. Had she died in 183 eased by the time he wrote them; but since she died in 1839, the pain of her loss would have been still fresh, and perhaps provides a key i the journals composed, the plays performed, and the artworks created) by Dicky and all her other children.

Building on this key chronological point, Scott's main lines of argument are clear and incontrovertible: these letters were not the friv youngster but (potentially) "an emergency response to a psychological crisis" (13). Although laden with humor, it is a humor that Scott finc means of diverting and distracting both the author and his father from the emotional crises that shook the Doyle family at the time (Mrs Dc years later by that of her fourth son, Francis, in 1843). But besides distracting himself and his father from grief, Scott argues, the letters se the ground of unofficial apprenticeship for Richard's expected career as an artist, illustrator, and satirist. His father imposed this apprentice for the submission of the weekly letters (ix), and thus sought to teach his son an important lesson (although accounts of Doyle's subsequer in part).

Scott also finely construes the letters as a sequence or symphony in six movements. Yet even while noting the patterns into which th Doyle's aesthetic vision and competence, he recognizes that each letter is a response to circumstance, and therefore not consciously meant analysis is conveyed in hugely enjoyable and accessible prose, as "cool" and "bright" as he finds Doyle's own work (23). Though grounded i Scott's commentary on the letters also unearths their literary, historical, cultural, and psychological roots, pondering what they reveal abou emotions. On its own merits, therefore, Scott's introductory essay takes its place amongst the best studies of Doyle available. It effectively including the indispensable history of Victorian-era illustration, illustrated books, and periodicals.

The letters themselves are still more rewarding. They refer to all manner of early Victorian minutiae and ephemera that can and shou and readers seeking an ever more lively and rich impression of the past. Throughout, Doyle's unbounded imagination and artistic whimsy r compositions; in a multitude of windows, he describes and depicts the life of the theater, street, political arena, social structure, and cultur; Furthermore, Scott annotates each letter with the sort of information we need to understand it fully. In a note to Letter No. 9, for instance, golfballs were teed up on small heaps of sand rather than on pointed pegs. He also identifies all names, places, dates, events, works of art, the letters, and helpfully, in most cases, he points the way to further information should it be needed. Indeed, I can identify only one error contrary to the claim that Queen Victoria visited the House of *Commons* (24), she never did so; given constitutional conventions going back would have occasioned a revolution.

This volume should interest both the general reader and all Victorianists. In the context of my own field, the volume helps to reaffirm decades ago (in *The History of the Comic Strip, Volume 2: The Nineteenth Century* [1990]): that the modern comic strip and the graphic n of artists like Doyle, who experimented with text and image in new and innovative ways. In Doyle's own case, many of these experiments s pages of *Punch*, where they influenced countless generations of cartoonists and consumers alike. Doyle began his work for the *London Cha* completing the last of his letters to his father. As Scott makes clear in his Afterword, Doyle mined the contents of his letters (and journal) f material he had perfected during his paternally-imposed apprenticeship to create vibrant new works for public consumption such as the *Pur* 1844 and which lasted--with minor variations--until 1954. Rather than cutting his teeth at *Punch*, then, he had already proven his extraor

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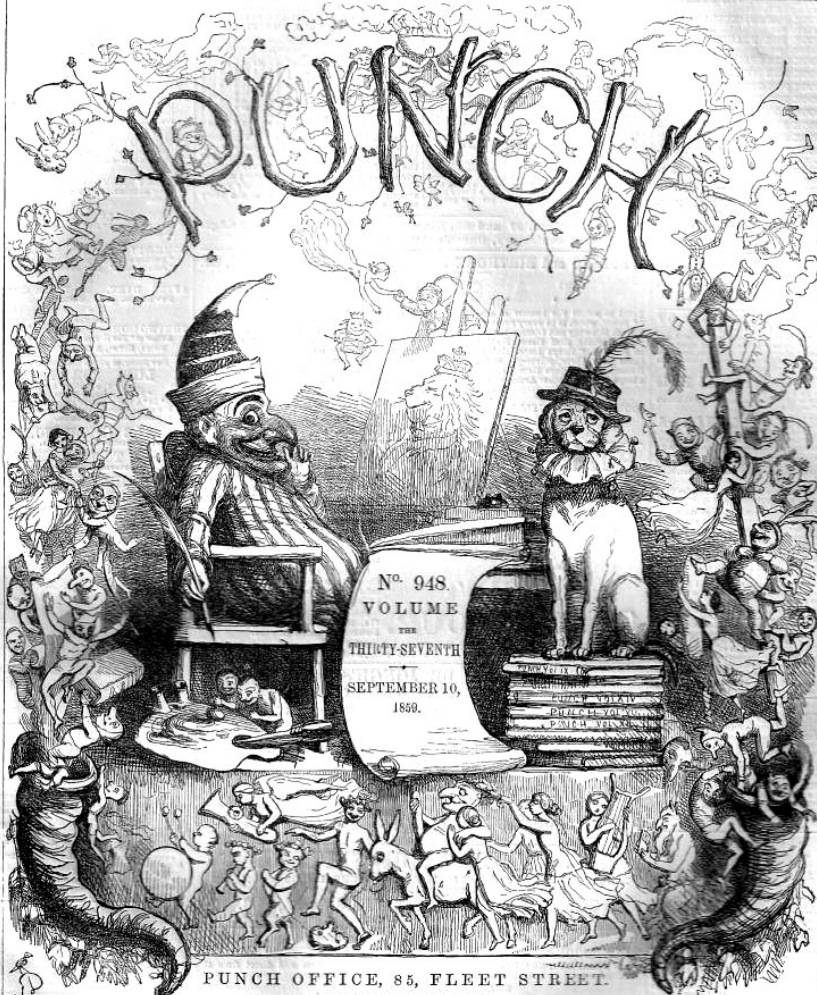
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The demon Punch perched upon the table, in exultation, points to the "Procession," his "Christmas Piece". Karlquinn too, as indicative of Christmas, weeps over his little quantity of yours, a crowd of little wretches, in the foreground, by referring to the productions of former years, prove what can be done, and others in the back ground are plainly showing that it was not for want of paper. I think this the sweetest kiss in the little man with the money bag.



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My Dear Father

The nearer it becomes to Christmas the more regard to certain annual productions, called "say that I have got very little done (so little in at it) I say nothing more nor less than the truth be surprised if the unfortunate being who no despair put off his Christmas day until some be hoped, but yet one when he may be better demands upon his pencil. There is one circumstance mentioned, it does not appear that the Punch of itself, to cause it. Very true! but then there the Cartoons, the drawing of two of which you don't know how many, occupied a great deal [have brought your mind and energies to bear to go with any pleasure (and consequently with so that although I took to Punch and the Car it difficult, wrapt up as it were, in them, to re don't you think that it will be much better, in state the little work I have done for you, to a more satisfactory condition? Of course you do

On the next page you will find a representation as he appeared at the moment when he gave up nine o'clock p. m. The composition is an allusion to those who choose to do so) as superior to a old masters. All must acknowledge that it is very better, unless, indeed, it were improved, with the youth reclining against the back of his chair looking most melancholy. He is thinking—your friends will say at Christmas, when he is asked and echo will answer, "Where?" [p. 3] The drawing in exultation, points to the "Procession," his indicative of Christmas, weep over the little

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The decision to reproduce Doyle's original, handwritten (and hand-drawn) manuscripts in facsimile, followed by an annotated text, as imparts the same sense of authenticity and artistry as did the 1885 edition of Doyle's *Journal* of 1840 (now in the British Library), and Christmas designers at Ohio University Press have adapted the "look" of the original Doyle pages to the volume overall, and included little illustrations editorial text as well as in the front- and back-matter. There is also a group of colored plates showing many of the letters in their original, very attractive book indeed, with an internal coherence that is often lacking in similar edited volumes. My only complaint is that a higher-resolution the cover, where marginalia from Doyle's letter of September 11, 1842 is decidedly pixelised.

As a final note, Scott's volume of Doyle letters is the third in the developing Ohio *Series in Victorian Studies*, edited by Joseph McLau volume might do justice to John Doyle's other sons and their letters to him. For now, however, Scott's book is a standout contribution to a strong catalogue of other Victorian-themed publications, further underscoring Ohio's leadership in this dynamic and much-contested field.

Richard Scully is Senior Lecturer in Modern European History at the University of New England, Australia.

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